

Jack Ruby and the Las Vegas Connection

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It is abundantly clear to those who have studied the JFK assassination that Jack Ruby, the killer of Lee Harvey Oswald, was much more than the deranged, patriotic night-club owner that the Warren Commission made him out to be. Although the Warren Report acknowledged that as a youth "Ruby was unquestionably familiar, if not friendly, with some Chicago criminals" (p. 790), the Report ultimately concludes that "the Commission believes that the evidence does not establish a significant link between Ruby and organized crime." (p. 801)

Yet there exists considerable evidence that Commission members were aware of Ruby's Syndicate connections and deliberately avoided probing areas that would illuminate Ruby's mob ties. /1/ These revelations would have severely undermined the theory that Ruby had acted alone. The Commission was not alone in its concern over Ruby's associates. Both the Dallas police and the FBI similarly risked great embarrassment if the story of Ruby's crime connections were made known.

The Scott Papers

Peter Dale Scott, a professor at the Univ. of California at Berkeley, has done valuable research into Ruby's Syndicate connections. Scott has discussed some of the fruits of his labor in his unpublished manuscript "The Dallas Conspiracy" and most recently in a 50-page paper on CIA-Mafia connections and the Schweiker-Hart Report. (This recent paper can be obtained through the AIB office for \$3.00. For more information, contact AIB, 63 Inman St., Cambridge, MA 02139). Much of what follows is drawn from Scott's work.

Ruby in Las Vegas?

Members of the AIB, myself included, recently made a journey westward to give some lectures and conduct several interviews in connection with ongoing research projects. One of the cities we visited was Las Vegas, Nevada. While in the nation's capitol, we attempted to learn more about connections that Jack Ruby had had in Las Vegas, and the allegations that Ruby had visited Las Vegas on several occasions in the fall of 1963. (Some of these rumors were contained in Commission documents—CE 1586). From well-informed sources, we learned that there is good reason to believe that Ruby did visit Las Vegas in the months prior to the assassination. But we were also told an incident that well illustrates the vast perimeters of the "grey alliance" — the collusion between the mob, law enforcement officials and politicians that allows Syndicate operations to proceed unimpeded.

The FBI Wiretaps

In early 1964, the FBI was apparently intent on seeing what it could learn of Ruby's Las Vegas connections and so a series of wiretaps were placed on the phones of numerous casinos and hotels in Las Vegas. The transcripts and/or summaries of these wiretaps were sent to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. When Bobby Kennedy (still Attorney General) learned of these wiretaps, he asked to be provided with copies of the transcripts. Soon Lyndon Johnson got into the act. When he learned that Bobby had received the transcripts, LBJ demanded that copies be made available to him. It so happened that Johnson was in fairly regular communication at that time with Ed Levinson, the owner of the Fremont Hotel in Las Vegas. The Fremont was a location for some of the FBI's wiretaps. Johnson, it would appear, was able to keep Levinson informed of the progress and results of the wiretaps.

Ed Levinson and Lyndon Johnson

Ed Levinson was a front for Meyer Lansky, the "annointed head" of the National Crime Syndicate. Levinson was originally from Newport, Kentucky, where the Cleveland Syndicate had developed a regional gambling center in the early 1940's. /3/ Levinson handled the Flamingo in Newport for Bugsy Siegel and Lansky before moving to Las Vegas where he fronted for Lansky at several casinos, including the Sands and the Fremont. /4/ Levinson had become close to Johnson through his business relationship with Bobby Baker, Johnson's former secretary in his days as Senate Majority leader. It was in fact Baker's business dealings with Levinson and another Lansky lieutenant, Benny Sigelbaum, in the Serv-U vending company that originally caught the attention of Senate investigators /5/ and threatened to cause great embarrassment to Lyndon Johnson.

J. Edgar Hoover and Clint Murchison, Jr.

Johnson was not the only one concerned about the Bobby Baker investigation. J. Edgar Hoover was similarly threatened by potential revelations of Baker's patronage. Hoover was a frequent guest at the Del-Charro Hotel in La Jolla, Calif., where his tab (\$100-a-day suites) was regularly picked up by the Hotel's owner and Hoover's close friend, Texas oilman, Clint Murchison. /6/ During the Kennedy years, when Murchison was paying Hoover's bills, Murchison himself was under FBI investigation in connection with the Bobby Baker case. /7/ Jack Anderson and other sources have reported that Hoover's visits frequently coincided with occasions where known gamblers and racketeers, some with direct links to the Syndicate, were registered there. /8/ In fact, Lansky lieutenant and Baker business associate, Ed Levinson is said to have been one of the frequent visitors at the yearly gatherings at Del-Charro. Thus, it seems a small wonder that Hoover and Johnson had an interest in limiting not only the Baker investigation but also the probe of Ruby's crime connections. /9/

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NOTICE from Berkeley Enterprises

Because of the new "ball game" constituting the Congressional Committee on the assassinations, we do not believe that the project of "The Assassination Papers — Volume 1" now makes sense.

Accordingly, any money sent in for this project will be credited against a renewal for "Pursuit" — unless the purchaser requests otherwise.

Footnotes

- /1/ Peter Dale Scott provides one such example:
"When Ruby's roommate, George Senator, was questioned about more than fifty names in the notebook of a Ruby employee, one entry -- Pete Whate- Atty- Un Life Bldg Rl 1-1295 (19 H 73) -- was for some reason passed over (14 H 295, cf. 14 H 34). The Warren Commission, which purported to be looking for links between Oswald and Ruby, should have been interested in this one -- the appearance in a Ruby notebook of what had already been learned to be the address, phone number, and office mate of William McKenzie, Marina Oswald's attorney (17 H 768). If they had checked more closely, they would have noted that one of White's partners (Ivan Irwin, Sr.) came from the family law firm identified to the FBI by a Mafia representative (Paul R. Jones) as the conduit for pay-offs by organized crime to Dallas law enforcement officials. (22 H 298)."
- /2/ The Dallas police sought to minimize their known contacts with Ruby. Police Chief Curry tried to make the Warren Commission believe that only 25 to 50 of the 1,175 men on the force knew Ruby. Even the Warren Report calls this figure "conservative" (p. 224). It is known that of the 75 policemen present when Ruby shot Oswald, 40 of them knew Ruby. This percentage is supported by other statements, some to the effect that Ruby was acquainted with 75 to 80 % of the police force. (CE 1467). There exists some evidence that Ruby was in fact a liaison between the Dallas police and organized crime. (CE 1761, CE 1763).
- /3/ Hank Messick, "Lansky" (Berkeley Medallion, 1971), p. 131.
- /4/ Ibid, p. 196.
- /5/ Peter Dale Scott, "The Dallas Conspiracy," Chapter IV, p. 9, "New York Times," 6/17/64
- /6/ Scott, Chapter VI, p. 9, Jack Anderson, 12/31/70
- /7/ Scott, Chapter VI, p. 5, Victor Lasky, "Kennedy Justice" (NY, Atheneum, 1971, p. 30)
- /8/ Scott, Chapter VI, p. 6
- /9/ Harry Hall, former Dallas gambler turned informant, said he turned over 40% of his gambling profits to Ruby who "was supposed to have influence with the police, so that he would have no worry about any gambling arrest" (23 H 263). Hall also said that he and Ruby knew a "Texas millionaire named Bill Byers who came from Tyre, Texas and who was friendly with 2 other Texas millionaires, Murchison and Andraddy." Ruby had wanted Hall to help rob "Byers" of his bankroll and Hall heard later that "Byers was robbed while at the Del-Charro Hotel, La Jolla, Calif. This hotel is owned by Mr. Murchison." (23 H 263). This "Billy Byers" from "Tyre" would appear to be Texas oil millionaire Billie Byers from Tyler, Texas who "... like Murchison and Bedford Wynne was a political sugar-daddy for the Texas Oil Lobby." From Peter Dale Scott, "The Dallas Conspiracy," Chapter VI, pp. 2-3. □

trying to achieve this. I must confess I was unsuccessful, but it is very possible that this investigation of the House of Representatives would achieve in a lot shorter period than six years what we were unable to do in the courts.

Q: The FBI is now known to have hounded Martin Luther King and there has been speculation that the FBI may have some way been involved in his death. Do you subscribe to this possibility?

A: I have seen no evidence to that effect and I have seen in both the John F. Kennedy case and the Martin Luther King case that one has to be careful to distinguish between the crime and the investigation. I think in the Martin Luther King case that the FBI because of its animosity for Dr. King may not have made what we would consider their best effort to investigate it. But we have made a long jump from that possibility to the possibility that the FBI had anything to do with killing. It seems to me that these are questions that gave the congressional committee the powers that they have. I don't really know that speculating gets anywhere.

Committee to Investigate Assassinations: Why? — A Job Now Successful

Q: Your Committee to Investigate Assassinations, what do you think it has been able to accomplish? Why was it formed?

A: It was formed for two basic reasons. One was to get the critics of the Warren Commission to coordinate their efforts. The basic aims of the group were to gather information to keep the subject of John Kennedy's assassination alive until we could convince the Congress to reopen their own investigation. Fortunately, I think we've been very successful. The subject has been kept alive. As the climate in the country changed, the climate in Congress changed; we were able, with the help of a lot of other people, to persuade them to go in with a full-fledged investigation. We intend to turn over all of our investigation to them and to give any other assistance.

The End of Speculation? — Perhaps

Q: There's been an eternal fascination with John F. Kennedy's murder. Do you think when or if the House investigation reaches its conclusion that will lay to rest finally the speculation?

A: I believe that if this House committee continues to get the support in the next Congress that they have in the last months of this Congress, that they will investigate this killing thoroughly. I think they will cull out the leads, I think they will look at all the evidence, and if after that length of time and that length of investigating, they conclude that the Warren Commission was correct, I certainly think that 99.9 percent of the people will be satisfied. I must say that in all honesty, I know of a few people who are never going to be satisfied; at least you can never satisfy all of them because they each have a particular theory. And these theories are internally inconsistent if nothing else. But I think that as a practical matter that if a congressional committee, and if not this one, maybe the Senate committee or maybe both of them, will attack the job they are supposed to do, I think that most of the doubts, if not all of them, will be laid to rest. □